COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

#chapter1

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Remember posting flyers on telephone polls or on community boards at the library to get the word out about your services—or something you had for sale? Well, yes, these flyers are a type of media and they are a way to reach out to a community, so I suppose they're technically a form of social media. But this isn't what we're talking about here.

There are now much better ways to reach people who might be interested in what you've got. Ways that aren't limited to those who happen to walk by. And these new tools offer your audience a chance to reach back, so to speak, and interact with you and each other online and on demand. These are the tools we're referencing when we use the term *social media*.

I know it can get confusing, so allow me to explain the difference between the two types of communication we've mentioned so far. The term *media*, in a traditional sense, refers to relatively static, one-way modes of communication that broadcast information to a large population of people. We're talking about conventional marketing and PR tools like tv advertising, billboards, print ads, newspaper placement, and even the aforementioned flyers along with other formats that have been used for many generations to send out news and messaging.

But convention is changing. No longer are consumers paying attention to the self-serving proclamations of businesses with stuff to sell. It's so "last year" for companies to tell us what we need ... at their convenience. A new savvier marketplace is comprised of people who make purchase decisions based heavily on information they seek out, primarily on the Internet—on demand.

In this and other ways, social media represents a dramatic shift in how we, as both marketers and consumers, deliver and receive information. Digital tools are opening fantastic opportunities for highly engaged interaction among people—in real time. That is, social media participants can comment, share, bookmark, vote, and more on whatever topic is being addressed. Or they can begin a whole new line of discussion if interested enough.

This means that you can listen, discuss, and engage in relationship-building on the Internet, through sites that you can also use to provide news and updates about yourself and/or your business. It's like simultaneously being in many different places—coffee shops, conferences, networking events, etc.—and having conversations with all of your different communities.

And truly, this is a luxury that customers have come to expect now that so many companies are using online connectivity to reach and engage their markets. Customers insist on receiving information that actually matters to them, information that can help them make smart decisions. They expect to be able to reach back and have their questions and concerns addressed quickly.

Thus, the digital market interaction of social media allows and even encourages unrestricted discussion, an unstructured sharing of ideas and opinions. And this is the backbone of social media's evolution. It's alive and growing every single day.

The 2.0 Evolution

The web is constantly evolving without too much fanfare, but there was a significant shift at the turn of this century, when collaborative, social sharing and networking tools gradually emerged to allow for widespread user interaction, collaboration, and content development.

We refer to this shift as *Web 2.0*, which differs from Web 1.0—a more traditional communication platform that projected information to audiences without offering an opportunity to actively engage. Yet, instead of an actual technical upgrade, the term Web 2.0 describes how developers and users now approach and utilize the Internet.

During the web's infancy, its 1.0 phase, information was created by publishers and distributed to readers. It was essentially a read-only era. Well, Web 2.0 democratized the Internet, making it much more vibrant and valuable. I mean, think about some of today's most popular websites. Facebook would be a mere shell without its users and their updates. Wikipedia wouldn't be half the resource it is if no one added information to it.

Users dominate today's Internet. So savvy brand message-makers are moving away from the fluff and spin of yesteryear and trying instead to truly integrate messaging with the wants and needs of consumers to develop an effective public presence. At minimum, this requires authentic communications; meaningful information; and room for comments, a power to vote, or a place to make suggestions.

Yet, of course, conventional media is not obsolete. My girlfriend has a corkboard with coupon clippings, and it's updated constantly. Companies just need to learn how to incorporate social media platforms into their marketing mix. But it's just a matter of time before check-in programs (like FourSquare) will provide coupons right on a mobile phone when its user is nearby.

Dynamic Marketing

Social media is all about interaction—it's your dialogue with your network and their interaction with each other. The following three actions will help you use social media effectively:

> *Talk with your clients—not at them.*

- **Listen** to what your audience is saying. What do they need, want, dislike?
- **Engage** with people through genuine conversation (not solicitation).
- **Evaluate** your efforts with analytic programs.

We'll dive deeper into these three actions later in the book. For now, just know that building relationships through social media—or anywhere for that matter—is increasingly important to the future of your business. But it's a two-way street. Business relationships require meaningful dialogue with your market, because promotional monologue feels like spam in most every format.

This is why the term *social media* can be confusing. By definition, *media*, a tool for communicating to large groups of people, is social—technically. But, as mentioned earlier, this word has traditionally referred to one-way blasts of information that are crafted for the masses. Good marketers are catching on quickly though. Consumers have a voice, too, and they want companies to hear what they're saying.

A common misconception is that asking clients to Like a Facebook page means automatic social engagement. In this particular situation, the display board for this boutique florist neither gives the URL for its page (or a QR code). It also fails to offer a reason to Like them in the first place. The request would be more appealing if it tried to engage with its potential audience by asking, for example, for people to "name their favorite flower." Or better, "submit a photo of your favorite flower" and have a chance at being immortalized on the walls of the shop.

Even televised commercials are getting on board. Many are no longer running with “Buy this!” Instead, the message is more like a request: “Tell us what you think at facebook.com/[company-name]!” or “Upload your video here! [link]”

An example of a successful social media marketing campaign is Canon’s Project Imagin8ion, which asks people to submit their photographic inspirations via youtube.com/imagination. The program encourages viewers to visit Canon’s YouTube Channel to interact and subscribe. This builds a relationship with users in a competitive environment. Who doesn’t love a good contest?

As a company, Canon has adapted to a world with social media. Instead of just prompting people to buy a Canon product, this campaign asks people to explain how Canon inspires them—and ultimately Ron Howard. The answers come in as photos … ideally from a Canon camera. And if you don’t own a Canon, maybe the inspiring photos in the competition will convince you to switch.

Project Imagin8ion: Here is a Ron Howard production based on eight submitted photos.

Use this strategy when creating your social media content. Focus less on “Hire me!” and more on “Tell me how I can help or inspire you.” Encourage response! That can facilitate some very valuable relationships.

Also make it fun for your audience to converse among themselves. You can gain some very valuable insight to what they want and need from you as they explore a topic or debate an issue. Tune in to this and then deliver!

www.youtube.com/imagination
YouTube
Search
Browse
Movies
Upload
Create Account
Sign In
PROJECT
IMAGIN8ION
Canon
Welcome to Project Imagin8ion, the first ever user-generated photo contest to inspire a Hollywood short film. In the next month, 8 photos will be chosen by Ron Howard to set the stage for his next production.
— What will you inspire? —
TIME LEFT TO SUBMIT MOVIE THEMES
DAYS HRS MIN SEC
07 09 10 26
ENTER CONTEST/GALLERY »
CONTEST DETAILS »
FAQ »

Project Imagin8ion: The contest is very interactive. Users may upload photos, vote for people, have conversations, critique or commend submissions, and ask questions about how certain shots were taken.

Earning Trust

Obviously, trust is a really big deal in business. No one hopes to get swindled. And since anyone can create a website or blog nowadays—for free and within minutes—how does a person know if the content they're reading is accurate, given the lack of filters and qualification checks on the Internet?

Indeed, earning online consumer trust can be difficult for some businesses. But it's a fairly straightforward process. Here's the secret: be truthful; don't intentionally mislead others. And ultimately, it helps to accept the fact that all you can do is provide good information and trust folks to make the right decisions for themselves.

Along those lines, when developing a social media program—or any communication campaign for that matter—it's important to realize that no matter how great the information is that you provide, the one entity consumers tend to trust most is *other consumers*. So let's take a peek at a company that has successfully harnessed this social paradigm: Amazon. Its customer rating and suggestion system demonstrates unprecedented trust in its customers.

That is, the Amazon site allows anyone to write and read honest reviews about every product it offers. It even suggests other titles one may enjoy based on a given search. Even more, Amazon provides information on its competitors who may be offering the same product at a cheaper price! If this isn't a display of genuine trust in the marketplace, I don't know what is.

And despite the perilous effect of a negative review in the old days of single-source expert-written book reviews in a magazine or newspaper, in today's online marketplace, truthful feedback by consumers generates a level of trust that couldn't have been bought for any price in the past. Amazon is genius. But try to think of a single other company that publicizes customer complaints or makes it so easy for you to make your purchase from a competitor. Exactly. Before the Internet was born, suggesting such a thing as serious business strategy could have earned you a pink slip.

After viewing a book, Amazon suggests books that other customers looked at as well.

Successful companies now provide more information than ever on their products and services. Those who don't understand this critical shift in consumer expectations or who appear to be hiding information are, at best, missing out on huge potential strides in earning trust among buyers.

Relevant Relationships

No matter how much you love it or hate it, social media is necessary for viable businesses. It's the Main Street of our times, where your customers are congregating, browsing, and making purchasing decisions. If you're not there; you virtually don't exist—at least in the minds of a sizable portion of your full potential market.

Yet developing and sustaining a valuable social media program takes time. And it requires a different kind of effort than a traditional media program, which basically takes a catchy message and adapts it to a ton of different platforms. Because social media allows a user to virtually be in many places at once, it's much more important to think about what you're putting out there (Does anyone care?), how often you post updates (Are you driving people nuts?), what platforms you're using (Is anyone even there?), and who you're reaching (Do you have the right audience?).

All of this matters a lot when creating your network—your community in the social media world. It's the basis of your *social currency*, your value to those in your network. So when you're building a social media program, you need to understand and remember that the promotional strategies on which social media operate are engagement and conversation—not straight selling.

We'll dive deeply into considerations for social media content in Chapter 4: The Power of Content. But for now, it's important to know that your content needs to be interesting and valuable to your network—or else they'll leave you. Sales are a potential byproduct of the relationships you build through social media, but simply pushing traditional marketing and sales messaging through this platform isn't going to work.

Consider Pepsi Co.'s decision to forego their advertising buy during the 2010 Super Bowl to instead invest $20 million in a social media program called Pepsi Refresh—a program that allows individuals and organizations to submit ideas for local-initiative grants ranging from $5,000 to $50,000. Since winners are selected by public vote, contestants are

encouraged to promote the heck out of the Pepsi Refresh program and, obviously, beg everyone they know to vote for their grant idea.

Cause-based marketing isn't new, but social media gives it a boost that can help companies leverage it in new and dramatic ways with public votes! Through its program, Pepsi has sponsored thousands of community projects—all while dramatically strengthening its relationships with communities throughout the US. The program shows that Pepsi understands something that many other large corporations still don't get: meaningful public interaction is more important to brand loyalty than entertaining tv spots.

The payoff for Pepsi is great. Instead of being known only as a mega-company that sells soft drinks, Pepsi is now revered as a generous benefactor for important community initiatives. We'll take a closer look at building your network and developing powerful content in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

Emergence of Social Platforms

So where did all this come from, you ask? Well, it's still pretty new. Web logs (or blogs) have been around for quite some time among the ultra-geeky set, but the social media phenomenon truly began when Facebook emerged in February 2004 and quickly replaced MySpace, which had been among the first well-known social networking sites available. Twitter followed two years later, and the whole social media thing roared to life. People were thrilled with these cool new ways to communicate and regarded social networking as a way to reconnect and stay in touch with friends through personal updates.

And this is pretty much why some people still resist using social media. The mundane updates get tiresome if you don't care. "I don't need to know when you're on the John," people complain. Or, "I don't care if you're eating at Olive Garden."

Yet those who see past the noise recognize that the opportunities for important interaction with social media are fantastic. For instance, while companies spend millions each year on market research surveys and focus groups to find out what customers are thinking, consumers are now *giving* away this valuable data—every day. Even more exciting, companies can engage in direct dialogue with customers to find out even more! And there are no honoraria fees to pay these respondents. Cha-ching.

But I don't blame the non-adapters. To be honest, I'm not too interested in knowing when my buddy is eating at Olive Garden either, unless I thought we were meeting someplace else! I am, however, very interested in things he likes/hates about a particular place or if something weird happens.

For example, say you ate so many breadsticks that the manager came out to check on you. Or that you, being lactose intolerant, had Zuppa Toscana without realizing it contains milk, which led to a disastrous dash to the men's room. This would be material for a good post.

Funny? *Oh yeah!* Embarrassing? *Quite.* More importantly, do you think your followers and friends would enjoy this information? *No doubt.* In fact, if they're like me, they'll laugh diabolically on the inside and send you a consoling note, even if it's just to show everyone else what an empathetic friend they are.

But what's truly amazing is how many variations of social media websites are now available. From a simple networking site designed for sending out personal updates, hundreds of different sites that serve a multitude of purposes have emerged. For instance, there are sites designed primarily for:

- **Communication:** blogs, social networking, advocacy, fundraising
- **Collaboration:** wikis, gaming, news, bookmarking
- **Sharing:** photographs, videos, music, presentations
- **Reviews:** movies, products, books, charities
- **Entertainment:** games, movies, books
- **Monitoring:** media hits, brand references, video clips

For photographers, the ability to post photos, videos, and text on various social media sites—and make this content sharable by those in your network—is something that just wasn't practical through previous forms of popular media. And it can be so gratifying and helpful to gather honest feedback on your work and ideas from other people. That's why, in this book, we'll focus on the tools that are designed mainly for communication and sharing. These powerful tools will not only help expand your market exposure; they can also help you grow as an artist and tune-in to your audience needs from the perspective of a business person.

Social Politics

Particularly for artists, an important element of social media is its power to provoke strong emotional responses. The public format and real-time presence of its content make social media a perfect tool for stirring support for causes and social movements.

Perhaps for the first time in history, individuals and groups who may or may not enjoy sufficient resources or adequate power to launch a traditional media campaign have the power of voice. And many are harnessing this power to create significant social movements worldwide.

Bypassing the filter of traditional media and other gatekeepers to public awareness, social media makes it possible for compelling content alone—from anyone willing to put it out there—to drive actions, whether that action is to buy, to hire, to donate … or to join, meet, and rebel.

It was no coincidence that Obama rolled up his sleeves and omitted a tie when he rallied volunteers in Philadelphia, "Let's get to work!" His humility and approachability enchanted his supporters.

Two rather recent examples of how social media has moved the dial of public opinion and historical action include Obama's 2008 election and 2012 campaign and the downfall of Mubarak in Egypt.

Barack Obama Election/ Campaign

Barack Obama was the first United States presidential candidate to recognize the value of mobilizing social networking as part of the political process. Instead of running a campaign that centered on the typical offline smear ads, Obama used social media to tell the world his personal story. He posted photos and videos of himself, and he encouraged people nationwide

to share their photos and stories online, too. He was thereby able to project himself as an authentic, forthright, and personable guy who really "gets it."

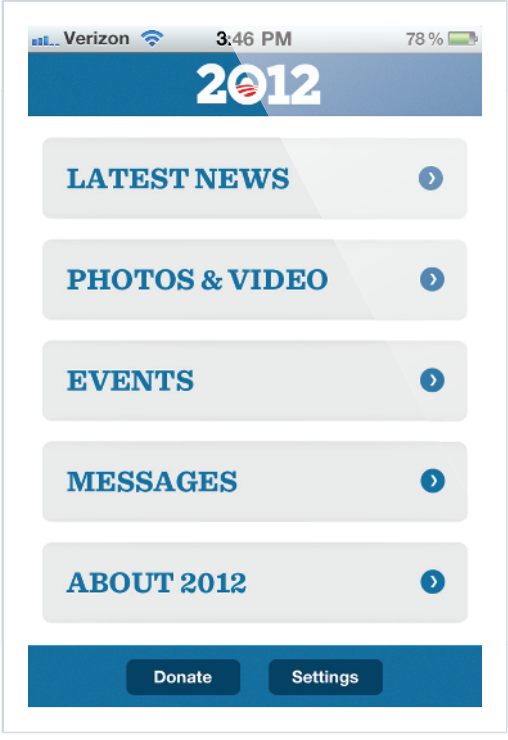
The comparison of socially networked campaigning and one centered on the negative, personal-attack ads that've dominated the US political election process in the recent past is something worthy of analysis. But I'll leave that to the pundits for now.

My point here is that social media has allowed Obama to present his positions on political issues in an intimate and engaging way to a wide variety of people. And by inspiring people to use social media platforms to create their own videos and blog posts about presidential messages, Obama jump started the democratic process, particularly for younger generations who've not experienced much participation in the politcal process. For the first time in a long, long time, like-minded—and unlike-minded people, too!—are conferring and debating online about our nation's political issues and governance.

Further, the speed of information transfer via social media allows people to act and react immediately. So, during Obama's 2008 campaign, updates about political gatherings were posted, and citizens rallied in local communities. Those who couldn't attend in person rallied online. Everyone who wanted a voice had one.

This fostered an emotional wave of renewed trust in the US political process. And this phenomenon earned Obama enough voter loyalty and support to win the prize. I firmly believe that this campaign fundamentally changed national politics forever. Social media has activated democracy like never before in our nation's history!

But that's only half of the story! Aside from organizing the Obama movement, toppling



Obama's iPhone application keeps supporters informed on events and allows them to make donations with a click of a button.

his opposition and mobilizing the youth to vote, social media continues to allow Obama to raise lots and lots of money. Ever notice that whether you're on his Facebook page, YouTube channel, iPhone application, or website, there is a donate button? He makes it as easy as possible to support him. So when a person becomes emotionally charged enough to make a difference, it can be done quite easily with a vote and credit card.

Egypt Mubarak

Another example of the potential power of social media is the resignation of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, following an 18-day uprising against his rule.

Despite the rules of martial law that banned Egypt's citizens from protesting, which had been in effect since 1967, organizers used Twitter and other social media to ignite the movement to remove Mubarak from office. Clearly, the sentiment of revolt had been present in the nation prior to the social media campaign, but the communication of logistics and the comfort of numbers gave citizens a clear call to action and knowledge that others would be there protesting, too.

The ruler was unable to curb the momentum of this movement. And the widespread dissemination of information about this uprising made it virtually impossible for the international community to look away.

#FAIL is a common hashtag used on Twitter. It denotes "failure."

Of course there are protests, natural disasters, and other newsworthy events happening throughout the world on any given day, but this particular uprising used something special to organize the citizenry and claim the world's attention. Yep, it was social media.

Oh, and did you notice how terms that are commonly used on Twitter and Facebook were integrated into the actual protest signs? *#FAIL* is a term used on Twitter that denotes *failure*. The protest signs provided a way for others to follow the event as it progressed, and it demonstrates how integrated Egypt was with the world at the time of these protests. That is, Mubarak's association with the #FAIL hashtag became a widespread message that was understood by many opposed to something in Egyptian Arabic. Indeed, social media is a vernacular in itself.

As shown by these examples, social media can be quite powerful when used as part of a communications strategy. The real-time presence of social media content fosters an emotional trigger when content is compelling. And it can generate powerful response by traditional media outlets, too, which can reinforce and, in many ways, legitimize a position or story.

So I'll say it again: social media is one of many tools that can be used in your marketing mix. Deciding if it's the best platform at any given time is part of the process of strategic planning, which we'll cover in the next chapter. Developing a strategic plan is all about deciding what you're trying to accomplish and mapping out the executable steps for achieving the kind of business you envision. Let's get started.

Socializing

An Interview with Kenny Kim, photographer

TWITTER: @kennykim
BLOG: blog.kennykim.com
WEBSITE: kennykim.com
FACEBOOK: facebook.com/kennykimphotography
INSTAGRAM: @kenny_kim
GOOGLE+: kennykimdotcom

Do photographers really need a blog?

It's funny that you ask me this. About a year ago, I simultaneously posed a question on my blog and Facebook: "I'm thinking of stopping my blog and migrating everything to Facebook. What do you (readers) think?"

Most replied by adamantly disagreeing with my thinking. They said it would be a mistake for me to give up posting on my blog. And, ironically, all the replies were coming from my Facebook account.

I did not stop writing my blog, and this experiment convinced me to focus more of my energy on other forms of media, mainly Facebook. It's important to maintain a conversation with readers, and these conversations need to happen amongst other readers. Right now, Facebook allows that to happen most conveniently. The blog brings it all together and provides a central staging point.

If you write a blog, what should it say?

If you are a photographer writing a blog, I believe your blog needs to convey your personal side in a professional way. If your clients are perusing through your website, you need to help them feel connected to you by showing your personality. But that does not mean you should write about anything and everything you're doing or thinking. There is a fine line between being professional and personal. The trick is to formulate content that reflects your professional side in a personal way. If you can do this, then your readers will get to know you as a person and as a photographer.

How do you use social media?

I currently use social media for many facets of my life. Professionally, I use it to connect with my clients and to share my images. Personally, I use it to keep up with the latest news and deals and to stalk some of my favorite celebrities. Ha.

If you have only one hour a day to devote to social media, how should you spend the Time?

Spend the time connecting with people on Facebook and sharing your images from recent shoots. Engage with people who start threads related to your interests.

Are you afraid of negative feedback via social media ruining your credibility?

Regardless of how any negative feeds come in, there's a lesson to be learned in each criticism. While getting negative feedback might not be the most pleasant experience, I welcome it and think it's great that someone cared enough to take the time to write something about my work. Beyond that, I try to see the perspective of the sender to figure out what I can learn from the feedback. Then, rather than worrying about a comment, I keep doing what I do, which is providing excellent services to my clients. Hopefully my actions can show who I am and what I prioritize.

If someone disagrees with something you say on social media, how do you handle it?

Sometimes agreeing to disagree is the best policy when it comes to this. Everyone is entitled to an opinion and to share it. A good way to handle this, in my experience, is to paint a bigger picture and try to be in the shoes of your audience to understand where a person is coming from. If the discussion goes out of control online, then it's sometimes best to resolve it through a private chat or personal discussion so you do not clutter other people's news feed.